

Veterans

The VA MidSouth Healthcare Network Wellness Journal

Health Watch

Winter 2010



**Bringing
health care
closer to you**

**Pet therapy
for Veterans**

**Residential care
services: An update**

MidSouth
Healthcare Network



Convenient and accessible health care

Dear Veteran:

Cold winter weather did not chill the warmth of the medical centers and clinics in the VA MidSouth Healthcare Network (VISN 9).

One of the highlights this winter was a visit by Secretary Eric Shinseki to the Community-Based Outpatient Clinic and the Veterans Center in Charleston, W.Va. The Secretary spent a considerable amount of time speaking with Veterans at both of these locations. Roundtable discussions were closed to the news media so the Secretary could talk privately with Veterans about their health and their health care experiences.

Secretary Shinseki is helping Veterans realize that today's VA is indeed a national treasure. VISN 9 remains true to Abraham Lincoln's promise "to care for him who shall have borne the battle ..."

As winter turns to spring, we're certain that you will notice positive improvements in programs and services at each of our medical sites. We understand that the practice of medicine is complex and we're working to make your care experience as convenient as possible—visiting a VA facility should be the least of your worries.

VISN 9 health care providers and staff strive to make sure you're getting all the health-related services you need and finding solutions to any physical or mental health issues. We're always exploring ways to make your care easy to access and treatment plans simple to follow.

John Dandridge Jr.
Network Director

Secretary
Eric Shinseki (third
from right) pays a
visit to the
Community-Based
Outpatient Clinic
in Charleston,
W.Va.



Veterans Health Watch is a wellness journal published quarterly by the VA MidSouth Healthcare Network (VISN 9). *Veterans Health Watch* is designed to promote healthy lifestyles and give Veterans and their personal caregivers insightful information about managing and accessing health care from VA Medical Centers within VISN 9.

This publication is not a substitute for professional medical advice, which should be obtained from your doctor.

Your feedback is welcomed. If you would like to comment on any of the articles or submit information for possible publication, please write to:

Editor, 10N9E
Veterans Health Watch
VISN 9
1801 West End Ave., Suite 600
Nashville, TN 37203

Executive Editor
Sandra L. Glover

Lead Editor
Willie Logan, Memphis, Tenn.

Editorial Board
Christopher Alexander, Nashville, Tenn.
Judy Fowler-Argo, Mountain Home, Tenn.
Debbie Brammer, Huntington, W.Va.
Chris Conklin, Murfreesboro, Tenn.
Destie Stimes, Lexington, Ky.
Judy Williams, Louisville, Ky.

Care closer to home



Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) provide Veterans with health care services that are closer to their homes. To improve access, the VA MidSouth Healthcare Network (VISN 9) has current and planned expansions of CBOCs within the service areas of its seven medical centers located in Tennessee, Kentucky and West Virginia. In 2009, several clinics were added to assist Veterans who live in the rural areas surrounding our medical centers.

More locations, more care

The Lexington VA Medical Center (VAMC) began the year by opening a new CBOC in Berea. In November 2009, the clinic in Somerset moved to a new and more spacious location. At year's end, all of the primary care clinics were relocated from the Cooper Division to the Leestown Division to consolidate services.

The Memphis VAMC opened CBOCs in Jackson, Bolivar and Dyersburg, Tenn., as well as Helena, Ark., bringing the total number of clinics to 10, with 14 individual points of care. "We're very excited about these improvements," says Donna Savoy, CBOC administrator at the Memphis VAMC.



Donna Savoy

The Louisville VAMC operates eight CBOCs. Year-end reports for 2009 show an increase in the number of Veterans seeking care at all clinics.



Peter Torok, M.D.

At the Tennessee Valley Healthcare System (TVHS), the addition of clinics in Christian County (Hopkinsville), Ky., and Warren County (McMinnville), Tenn., as well as four slated for 2010, will increase the number of CBOCs to 14. Roane County will be the site of the first new facility. Others in Giles, Maury and McMinn counties will follow. "These



The ribbon-cutting ceremony at the new Community-Based Outpatient Clinic in Berea, Ky.

new clinics will reduce travel times," says Peter Torok, M.D., CBOC coordinator at the James H. Quillen (Mountain Home) VAMC. "When a Veteran walks into one of our clinics, it's no different than walking into one of our medical centers. He or she will receive the same quality of care," says Wesley Moore, M.D., chief of primary care at TVHS.

The Mountain Home CBOCs in Bristol and Norton, Va., will open rural outreach clinics this year. Bristol's clinic will be located in Marion, while Norton's clinics will open in Vansant and Jonesville. Staff members in these facilities are expected to care for an additional 900 Veterans.

In 2010, the Huntington VAMC plans to expand its CBOC in Charleston, W.Va., and open a new rural health outreach clinic in Gallia County, Ohio. ■

→ Expanded options for you!

For information about the new and planned Community-Based Outpatient Clinics throughout VISN 9, visit www.visn9.va.gov.

Healing our heroes

Animal-assisted therapy can help



Almost any domesticated animal can become a therapy animal, but the therapy animals at the VA MidSouth Healthcare Network (VISN 9) are a special breed indeed. When these dogs come a-calling at VISN 9's VA Medical Centers, patients' faces just light up.

Patient-focused care

The animal-assisted therapy (AAT) programs at VA Medical Centers continue to reveal that animals can aid in the healing process. The well-trained, certified handler-dog teams work with the therapy staff to assist goal-directed treatment plans for patients. These treatment plans, designed to meet specific criteria in each individual's care plan, are an integral part of the patient's treatment process.

AAT teams are used to help patients with ambulation, wheelchair mobility and fine motor skills. The focus is on positive interaction as Veterans engage with the dog and handler, which diverts their attention away from issues such as chronic pain, feelings of depression or a reluctance to socialize with others.

For example, a Veteran who willingly walks with a therapy dog doesn't realize he is working on his endurance in ambulation or his balance. Upper extremity exercising is accomplished through ball-tossing activities. Veterans are often surprised at how quickly their therapy time passes and how much they accomplish when exercising with the AAT team.

Building positive experiences

Stroking and talking to one of the therapy dogs often leads patients to reminisce about experiences with their own pets. Smiles are abundant and long-lasting as the AAT team works its magic. Research shows that interacting with animals can lead to lowered blood pressure, reduced stress and increased motivation in therapy, just to mention a few benefits.

And Veterans aren't the only ones who reap the benefits. The staff appreciates an opportunity to break from the intensity of their day for some interaction with the handler-dog teams.

AAT has applications in a variety of therapeutic settings, from helping newly injured returning soldiers in the rehabilitation environment to World War II Veterans in long-term care settings. The health benefits are far-reaching and include improved physical, cognitive and social skills.

The roles that animals play can range from just spreading a little love among patients to actively participating in physical rehabilitation. Whether it's a soldier returning from recent service or a Veteran of a past war, the results are very similar. One returning soldier summarizes it this way: "There's a unique bond of love, comfort and support that you receive from the animal, and you don't feel judged." So the next time you're walking down a VA hallway and see an AAT team, stop and thank them for the difference they're making in the lives of our Veterans. ■



A Tennessee Valley Healthcare System patient enjoys some time with Wally, a therapy dog.



Lexington VA Medical Center therapy dog Skeeter comforts a Veteran.

“There’s a unique
bond of love,
comfort and support
that you receive from the
animal, and you don’t
feel judged.”

→ Puppy love

Contact your local VA Medical Center to learn more about animal-assisted therapy programs.



Therapy dog LottieDot captures the attention of a returning soldier during a Welcome Home event sponsored by the Memphis VA Medical Center.

Expanded residential care



eterans who have mental health problems often need a more structured plan of care in different therapeutic settings. In response, the medical centers in the VA MidSouth Healthcare Network (VISN 9) have upgraded or enlarged existing facilities, or are in the process of building new facilities, to ensure that Veterans have access to the services they need.

A continuum of care

VISN 9's psychosocial residential rehabilitation treatment programs (RRTPs) provide Veterans with around-the-clock care. Patients participate in rehabilitative activities at least four hours each day. To be eligible, Veterans must have a psychiatric or psychosocial need, be medically stable, not be in need of hospital or nursing home care and be able to care for themselves with minimal assistance.

Services include treatment for those who have:

- general psychiatric disorders
- substance-use disorders
- post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- chronic mental illness and are homeless

VA medical center updates

■ **Huntington VAMC:** Construction on a new psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery center and an expanded outpatient mental health clinic should be completed in September 2010. A new 15-bed RRTP unit is expected to be finished in December 2011.

■ **Lexington VAMC:** Fifteen PTSD beds and 15 beds designated for the substance abuse residential

rehabilitation treatment program (SARRTP) are located at the Leestown division.

■ **Louisville VAMC:** A 10-bed SARRTP unit is available. Services have been improved through extensive renovations and additions made to the facility.

■ **Memphis VAMC:** Construction to enlarge the existing RRTP and SARRTP units should be completed by summer 2010. The RRTP unit will go from five to 10 beds, and the SARRTP unit will go from 11 to 15 beds. Construction on a new PTSD residential facility is slated for 2012.

■ **Mountain Home VAMC:** A PTSD program and SARRTP are offered. Residential care is open to homeless Veterans and to those who don't require hospital or nursing home care but who are unable to live independently because of a medical or psychosocial condition.

■ **Tennessee Valley Healthcare System:** Substance abuse treatment and PTSD programs are offered. An outpatient residential program provides up to 28 days of lodging. A low-intensity outpatient program for Veterans who require substance use education and a 16-week, low-intensity psychoeducational class are also available. ■

A clinical social worker reviews the programs available on the residential care unit at the Memphis VA Medical Center.



→ Caring for you

Contact the VA Medical Center in your area for more information about residential care.

Are you getting enough sleep?

Sleep is as important to the human body as food and water, but most people don't get enough of it. The amount of sleep needed differs from one person to the next, depending on age, level of activity and overall health. Generally, adults need seven to eight hours of sleep each night to feel refreshed and function well. Teens and school-age children should get at least nine hours of sleep each night. Preschoolers need 10 to 12 hours a night.

Danger signs

A lack of sleep impairs performance. It reduces alertness, concentration, judgment, motivation, work efficiency, attention span and normal reaction time. Someone who loses sleep may become irritable and clumsy the next day. He or she may tire easily or speed up because of adrenaline. Other symptoms of fatigue and sleep deprivation in adults include:

- constant yawning
- dozing off when inactive or bored
- grogginess in the morning and throughout the day

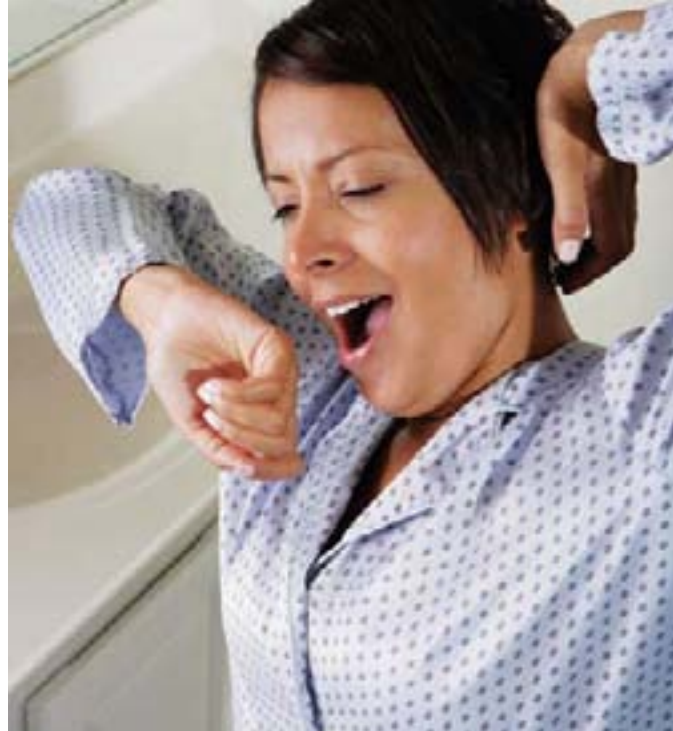
Common causes

If you're not sleeping well, it might be that you're worried about something or that you play

→ Kids and sleep

Lack of sleep affects children differently than adults. They tend to speed up when they're sleepy and may display some of the following behaviors:

- temper tantrums
- moodiness and irritability
- exploding at the slightest provocation
- hyperactivity
- taking daytime naps
- grogginess and reluctance to get out of bed in the morning



→ Get more ZZZs

Contact your VISN 9 health care provider if you or someone you love is having trouble sleeping.

your "to-do" list in your head at night. Lifestyle choices may be a factor—drinking caffeine or alcohol before bed ranks among the most common reasons for sleep deprivation. Causes of sleep deprivation can also include:

- illness
- work schedule
- acting as a caregiver
- medication
- sleep disorders (such as snoring or sleep apnea)
- a noisy or uncomfortable environment

Secrets to success

The good news is that sleep deprivation is preventable, but it probably means making some lifestyle changes. How can you get more sleep?

- Go to bed earlier.
- Don't drink caffeinated or alcoholic beverages too close to bedtime.
- Improve your environment—make it quiet, dark, cool and comfortable.
- Turn off the TV.
- Develop a nightly routine, including relaxation techniques, reading, listening to music or taking a bath.
- Seek the help of your health care provider. ■



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

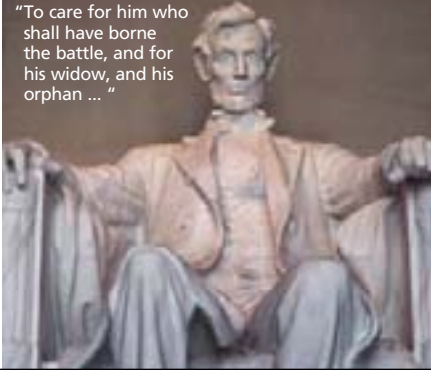
VA MidSouth Healthcare Network (10N9)
US Department of Veterans Affairs
1801 West End Avenue, Suite 600
Nashville, TN 37203

PSRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LEBANON JUNCTION, KY
PERMIT NO. 19

Printed With Soy Ink
Please Recycle This Publication
Copyright © 2010 VA MidSouth Healthcare Network

Keeping the promise

"To care for him who
shall have borne
the battle, and for
his widow, and his
orphan ..."



VA MidSouth Healthcare Network

www.visn9.va.gov/

Keeping the promise

Be the first to get news from your VA medical center! Sign up for our electronic mailing list today at www.visn9.va.gov/news/emailsignup.asp



TENNESSEE

James H. Quillen VA Medical Center

PO Box 4000
Corner of Veterans Way and Lamont
Mountain Home, TN 37684
(423) 926-1171
Toll free: 1-877-573-3529
www.mountainhome.va.gov/

VA Medical Center

1030 Jefferson Avenue
Memphis, TN 38104
(901) 523-8990
Toll free: 1-800-636-8262
www.memphis.va.gov/

VA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System

Alvin C. York Campus
3400 Lebanon Pike
Murfreesboro, TN 37129
(615) 867-6000
Toll free: 1-800-876-7093
www.tennesseevalley.va.gov/

Nashville Campus

1310 24th Avenue South
Nashville, TN 37212
(615) 327-4751
Toll free: 1-800-228-4973

KENTUCKY

VA Medical Center

1101 Veterans Drive
Lexington, KY 40502
(859) 233-4511
Toll free: 1-888-824-3577
www.lexington.va.gov/

VA Medical Center

800 Zorn Avenue
Louisville, KY 40206
(502) 287-4000
Toll free: 1-800-376-8387
www.louisville.va.gov/

WEST VIRGINIA

VA Medical Center

1540 Spring Valley Drive
Huntington, WV 25704
(304) 429-6741
(304) 429-6755
Toll free: 1-800-827-8244
www.huntington.va.gov/

